

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 MCT-01 SSM-03 /085 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, SHUM, AG, FR,
SUBJECT: ROBBERY AT ALGIERS SYNAGOGUE STIRS CONTROVERSY

1. SUMMARY: ALGERIANS HAVE TAKEN FRENCH PRESS TO TASK ON ITS COVERAGE OF ROBBERY AT ALGIERS SYNAGOGUE. ALTHOUGH ROBBERY MAY HAVE BEEN NOTHING MORE THAN MINOR VANDALISM, JEWISH LEADERS IN FRANCE SAID TO BE EXERCISED. FRENCH PRESS CLAIMS THAT PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE PERSONALLY REASSURED ALGERIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, AND, GIVEN HIS RELATIVELY TOLERANT PERSONAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, WE EXPECT INCIDENT TO BE SETTLED QUIETLY. END SUMMARY.

2. IN FEB 9 LE MONDE, PAPER'S ALGIERS CORRESPONDENT PAUL BALTA REPORTS THAT TWO YOUTHS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH PILLAGING SHALOM-LEBAR SYNAGOGUE IN BAB EL-OUED DISTRICT OF ALGIERS. IN ADDITION TO STEALING CERTAIN OBJECTS, YOUTHS SAID TO HAVE TORN UP TORAHS AND STAMPED ON PRAYER BOOKS.

3. ROGER SAID, HEAD OF ALGERIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, REPORTED AS SAYING THAT GOA INVESTIGATING TO SEE IF ADULTS HAD BEEN BEHIND ROBBERY AND IF DESTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS OBJECTS HAD BEEN PREMEDIATED. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, ALGERIAN
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JEWISH COMMUNITY, WHOSE NUMBER BALTA ESTIMATES AT 1,000, IS NERVOUS, PARTICULARLY SINCE TWO BUILDINGS BELONGING TO COMMUNITY HAD BEEN CLOSED BY AUTHORITIES IN DECEMBER. ALTHOUGH SUBSEQUENTLY REOPENED, AUTHORITIES HAVE REPORTEDLY ASKED THAT ONE BUILDING BE CEDED TO GOVERNMENT FOR OFFICE USE.

4. BALTA'S ARTICLE SAYS BOUMEDIENE AND MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH SAID. FEB 10 LE MONDE REPORTS THAT BOUMEDIENE RECEIVED SAID ON FEB 8 AND INDICATED UNDERSTANDING OF JEWISH SENSIBILITIES. BOUMEDIENE ALSO GAVE SAID TO UNDERSTAND, ACCORDING TO FEB 10 LE MONDE ITEM, THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO FIND AND PUNISH THOSE GUILTY.

5. GOA RESPONSE HEATED. FEB 10 EDITION OFFICIAL GOA DAILY, EL MOUDJAHID, REPORTS THAT ROBBERY, WHICH TOOK PLACE ON JAN 19, HAD BEEN MINOR INCIDENT, THAT OBJECTS TAKEN HAD BEEN RESTORED TO JEWISH COMMUNITY, AND THAT SUBSEQUENT USE OF WORDS SUCH AS PILLAGE" AND "PROFANATION" WERE POLITICAL AFTERTHOUGHT BY LE MONDE. EL MOUDJAHID ALSO NOTES THAT ONLY 6 OR 7 OLD PERSONS USE SYNAGOGUE AND ADDS THAT ACCORDING TO ITS INFORMATION, NUMBER OF JEWS LIVING IN ALGERIA IS MUCH LOWER THAN 1,000. ZIONIST "GENERAL STAFF" IN FRANCE, HEADED BY GRAND RABBI JACOB KAPLAN AND FRENCH JEWISH COMMUNITY PRESIDENT ALAIN DE ROTSCCHILD, HAVE, ACCORDING TO PAPER, EXPRESSED INDIGNATION, THEREBY EMBARRASSING THEIR REPRESENTATIVE IN ALGIERS WHO DID NOT EXPECT SIMPLE ROBBERY TO TAKE ON SUCH PROPORTIONS. "DOES THIS, " PAPER WONDER, " PRESSAGE BEGINNING OF NEW ANTI-ALGERIAN CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE?"

6 COMMENT: FENCH SOURCES SHARE OUR OPINION THAT BALTA WAS INDULGING A BIT OF POETIC LICENSE. LE MONDE'S FEB 10 ITEM SUGGESTS THAT GOA DOING ITS BEST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO CALM THINGS DOWN. UNLIKE SOME OF HIS IMMEDIATE SUBORDINATES, BOUMEDIENE HAS GENERAALLY SHOWN TOLERANT ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, AND OUR GUESS IS THAT THIS INCIDENT WILL BE SETTLED QUIETLY.

LYNE

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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